critical digest

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This Week in NYC

The Three Penny Opera will close Dec 17 after 2611 performances at Theatre de Lys. Brecht on Brecht: His Life and His Art, the Nov. Greater NY ANTA Matinee program of readings staged by Gene Frankel, will be the next production at Theatre de Lys, presented by Lucille Lortel. The Three Penny Opera played to over 750,000 during its seven year run, employed 709 actors in its 22 roles and grossed almost $3 million. Two road company attempts flopped.

Plays

Shows that closed include--Let It Ride after 69 and From The Second City after 87 performances ...Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole moved to Ambassador...Little Me musical based on Patrick Dennis' novel with Sid Caesar postponed from Apr to Nov 12...Mort Sahl at Nine O'Clock which was due Dec 29 has been withdrawn, and rescheduled for the fall...The Egg by Felicien Marceau with Dick Shawn, now in Chicago, will open in NY in Jan ... Dec 25, 1962 picked as opening date of Baker Street musical based on Sherlock Holmes character, to be presented by Alex Cohen.

Players

Anita Gillette to return to Carnival Dec 12-26, during Anna Maria Alberghetti's vacation, Gillette will then start rehearsals for All American...Thomas Gomez replaced Leo McKern, A Man for All Seasons, who withdrew due to illness. ...Clive Revill returned to Irma La Douce after playing in Las Vegas company...Noelle Adam to make US debut in No Strings...Leonardo Cimino, Albert Quinton, Patrick Hines added to A Passage to India Jan 31 ...Margaret Webster to direct The Aspern Papers Feb 7...Thyra Samter Winslow, novelist and critic of "Gotham Guide" died, 68.

Actors Equity reports 2061 parts were cast on Broadway last season from its membership of 13,000.

NYC Calendar

Black Nativity-41st (125 W 41) 11/11. Michael Santangelo-Barbara Griner-Gary Kramer present gospel song play by Langston Hughes, dir - ected by Vinette Carroll. With dancers Clive Thompson and Cleon Quitman(who replaced Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade who quit in opposition to show's title) and gospel singers Marion Williams, Alex Bradford and the Stars of Faith.

The Hostage-One Sheridan Sq-12/12. Norman Frances-Robert Margulies present revival of Brendan Behan comedy directed by Perry Bruskin with Helena Carroll, Jane McArthur, Normar Roland.

The Dark Lady of the Sonnets-East 74 (334 E 74) 12/12. Phoenix Theatre replaces Polish Play The Policemen with Shaw playlet on twin bill with Androcles and the Lion. Directed by Tom Gruenwald with Alison Howard, Frederic Warriner.

The Grand Vizer and Cayenne Pepper -De Lys 12/12 matinee. Greater NY Chapter of ANTA second program of season presents two short plays by Rene de Obaldia, directed by Robert Cordier with Warren Finnerty, Barry Primus.

Signs Along the Cynic Route-Actors Playhouse (100 7th Av S)-12/14. Precarious Productions present intimate revue by and with Will Holt, Dolly Jonah, plus Paul Krassner and drummer Robert Berend, directed by Walt Witcover.

Drama Desk

"The English Theatre- New Directions" will be considered at Dec 11 "Drama Desk" luncheon at Manhattan Hotel with--Santha Rama Rau, Gladys Cooper, Eric Portman, Donald McWhinnie, Michael Red - grave, Paul Scofield, Noel Willman, Donald Pleasence, Robert Shaw.

Legal Dept

Nine theatre unions are in disagreement how to split the 5% rebate from the NYC admission tax to be used for their welfare funds. Actors Equity claims 60%, while the other unions think they should get 50%.

Off Broadway

Dec 31 closing notices set for Albee twin-bill American Dream and Death of Bessie Smith and the American Savoyards. Latter to cut short planned 26 week season of musical repertory to tour...Claudia McNeil to star in Moon on a Rain - bow Shawl to be presented Jan 8 at East 11th St Theatre by Kermit Bloomgarden and Harry Joe Brown, Jr...Philip Bosco to portray title role in Hawkshaw at Midway, Gabriel Dell to portray title role in Fortuna at Maidman, both now set for Dec 20...The Cantilevered Terrace written and directed by William Archibald with Mildred Dunnock to be presented Jan 17 at 41st St...The Story of Mary Surratt being pre - sented by Equity Library Theatre Dec 9-16, directed by Herbert Nielsen.

Yiddish Theatre

Gezunt and Meshuga Yiddish revue starring Dzigan opened at the Casino Theatre (new name of Phoenix) playing week-ends only. Plans for This Was Burlesque revue dropped.

Theatre Book Notes

"Encyclopedia of Theatre Music" by Richard Lewine and Alfred Simon published by Random House ($8.95) contains complete list of all show tunes 1900-1960... "The Seven Ages of Theatre" survey by Richard Southern published by Hill & Wang.

Theatre Film Notes

A Shot in the Dark film rights bought by Mirisch Bros for $50,000; they plan a $3 million production...Mary Mary film version to be directed by Mervyn LeRoy.

Theatre TV Notes

The Four Poster to be presented Jan 13 on CBS in a one hour live adaptation by David Susskind

Tickets

Milk and Honey opened an advance sale box-office at Liberty Music Shop, Madison &50.

DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

Daughter of Silence-Music Box -11/30. 5 pro- and 2 con- Herald Tribune, World Telegram & Sun- filed on Morris West's adaptation of his own current novel presented by Richard Halliday, staged by Vincent Donehue with Emlyn Williams, Rip Torn, Janet Margolin, Joanne Linville. Three of the five affirmatives were raves, the morning paper reviewers, for the play, players, production. Two milder pros were for the trial scene sections, while all welcomed debut of 18 year old Margolin, graduate of NY High School of Performing Arts. Negative reviewers blamed both playwright and players. Rave parade headed by Taubman, Times, who cheered richly satisfying drama, staged with grasp of its tempo, enormously helped by fine cast. Times man hoped West will remain in theatre, he can distill dramatic excitement on an adult scale. Chapman, News, lauded play which on surface is an absorbing courtroom drama and which beneath the surface is a distinguished play given distinguished performance. Coleman, Mirror, applauded intelligent melodrama acted to the hilt by an excellent cast, directed skillfully, a literate, exciting excursion into the world of illusion. In a milder tone Watts, Post, approved of the powerful, but a little dissatisfying drama, at its best in the trial scenes. At times it seems as if two not entirely integrated plays seem to be taking place at once, although the general effect is absorbing, Post critic explains. McClain, Journal American, also okayed it for trial scenes which rank with the best and for emergence of Torn as a young star of full diminsion. Dissenter Kerr, Herald Tribune, fears play is spoiled by the absence of all those novelist's paragraphs for which no substitute has been devised, in which the heartbeat of the characters is measured and brought close. It isn't helped by the rather statuesque direction, and the author's own tendency towar Pineroesque rhetoric, Kerr added. Nadel, WTS, panned the stilted, ostentatious play in which only Williams makes it look like honest drama. The other leads appear as poor road company opera characters. It would take a combination of rewriting, recasting and redirection to lift this new drama to mediocrity, WTS reviewer concluded.

Shadow of Heroes- York (64 & 1st) 12/5. 3 pro - Times, World Telegram & Sun, Post- and 4 con- Herald Tribune, News, Mirror, Journal American- filed on "document" by Richard Ardrey about the Hungarian uprising in 1956, presented and directed by Warner LeRoy with Salome Jens, Muni Seroff, Sam Gray, Bernard Grant. Pro voters were moved by documentary play and the fine acting and production. Con voters felt play was more reporting than theatre, lacking in dramatic effect. All saluted outstanding performance of Salome Jens. Several noted speech of several in the large cast was inaudible, while several felt the ensemble crowd scenes were much better than the individual scenes. Affirmative viewer Taubman, Times, rave notice cheered the brief, pungent scenes with cumulative effect, directed to an uncommonly polished and sustained performance. Nadel, WTS, raved for strong and honest play with guts and enormous human dignity; he predicted that Jens' performance will stand as exquisite when the year's achievements are totaled. Watts, Post, marked it inescapably impressive, most interesting when driving ahead with its political history than in its romantic scenes. Negative viewer Kerr, Herald Tribune, noted that the sizable company of actors ready to give first-rate account of themselves are given very little that is moving to act, the author has seen all things politically, almost nothing privately. Davis, News, could find little to root for in play with good reporting, but little suspense. Coleman, Mirror, found little emotional impact in loosely knit and episodic impassioned documentary; though he reported many first nighters were spellbound.

Sing Muse!-Van Dam (15 Van Dam St)- 12/6 3 pro- Mirror, Post, Journal American- and 4 con-Times, Herald Tribune, World Telegram & Sun, Journal American- filed on modern dress musical version of "Helen of Troy" presented by Robert Feldstein, directed by Bill Penn, book and lyrics by Erich Segal, music by Joseph Raposo with Karen Morrow, Ralph Stantley, William Pierson. Critics were unanimously in praising blonde newcomer Morrow as "Helen", several comparing her favorable to a young Ethel Merman. Two affirmative notices were very mild, while Journal American was rave for "sleeper." Negative notices panned poor college "varsity" show, written by Harvard graduates. The rave from McClain, Journal American, applauded "sleeper" with six artful unknowns, sprightly music, legitimate traces of wit in book; fresh, funny and melodic. Coleman, Mirror, after admitting he lost his taste for campus frolics at graduation, okayed it if he had to go nostalgic; the score is superior to most. Watts, Post, was pleasantly surprised by show which though it hasn't always the creative skill necessary to live up properly to its high satirical ambitions, offers enough in the way of imaginative touches and pleasant music to make it a frequently entertaining evening. But negative voter Taubman, Times, feared it suffered from galloping cuteness, though authors may learn from experience. Crist, Herald Tribune, could find nothing worth saving but Morrow and the sets; with latter questionable as show may well set back the cause of classical-based comedy by a score of seasons. Davis, News, reported that Greek legend was beaten to death unmercifully in "louzay" musical. Nadel, WTS, found many admirable qualities, but feared in the end the result was not a show but merely the putting together of several hundred used parts. He does hope show lasts long enough for somebody to discover Morrow. All praised handsome 150 seat playhouse constructed in former political clubhouse.

The Long Voyage Home-Mermaid (422 W 42)-12/4 2 pro- Times, Post-and 2 con- Herald Tribune, World Telegram & Sun- filed on addition of 30 minute O'Neill curtain raiser to Paul Shyre's production of Diff'rent . Robert Gerringer is in the first play, while Michael Higgins, David Ryan, Jen Jones double in both short plays. Gelb, Times, approved of opening playlet as poignant sliver to serve as an appetizer until group puts on full evening of the four "S. S. Glencairn" cycle plays (of which this is the fourth.) Times reviewer noted several in cast not as salty as required. Herridge, Post, found it an effective curtain raiser and companion piece with sensitive staging. Con viewer , Morgenstern, Herald Tribune, thought only Gerringer convincing, the others seemed on salt-free diet. Alpert, WTS, vetoed dated play done in too leisurely a pace. Diff'rent opened Oct 17 to 4 pro-Times, Mirror, Post, World Telegram & Sun and 3 2 con- Herald Tribune, Journal American. Sole cast change has been David Ryan replacing Edwin Sherin.

NYC FUTURE CALENDAR

All Kinds of Giants- Cricket 12/18...Not While I'm Eating- Mad Av 12/19...Poppa Is Home- Gate- 12/19 ... Fortuna- Maidman-12/20...Hawkshaw- Midway-12/20... Take Her She'S Mine- Biltmore 12/21...First Love-Morosco-12/25...Subways Are for Sleeping-St James-12/26... Ross-O'Neill 12/27...Madame Aphrodite-Orpheum 12/27...Night of the Iguana- Royale- 12/28...Funny Thing Happened-12/28 ...Brecht on Brecht- De Lys 12/?

Captains & Kings- Playhouse 1/2...World Next Door- 1/3...Something About a Soldier- 1/4...Moon on Rainbow Shawl- Eastllth 1/8...Romulus- 1/9...Plays for Bleecker St- Circle 1/10...Giants Son of Giants- 1/11

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC PICKS HITS... What is wrong with the theatre at the moment is not the theatre itself, but the theatre's public, states Chapman, News. There is nothing anybody can do about the public-it cannot be threatened, coerced, educated or uplifted. It goes its own way and chooses its own shows. Once in a while it bestows its blessing on something good. The success of Camelot, News critic concludes, shows that the public is not as knuckle-headed as one thinks... Producers tend to underrate the intelligence of the public, over recent seasons they have been hypnotized by avant gardists, angry young Englishmen and downright trivia, comments Coleman, Mirror. Yet the meat and potatoes of show business has been the plays about men of stature--A Man for All Seasons, Gideon, Becket.

CORNELL RUMORS... Winchell, Mirror, and Kilgallen, Journal American, both heard rumors that Katharine Cornell is considering retiring. Latter reports that friends of actress hope she will reconsider during her stay as house guest at Noel Coward's home in Switzerland.

RODGERS' MELODY GENIUS... A genius of melody who has filled America with good music is how Atkinson, Times, rates Richard Rodgers, who was presented with Broadway Assn Gold Medal " For the Greatest Achievement for the Advancement of Broadway." If La Pericole is grand enough for the Met, then Carousel is more than entitled to the same respect as a work of art, a masterpiece, lobbies Times columnist.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Theatre people who know how to make a buck, rather than volunteer witnesses, should be interviewed by the House Sub-Committee on Education, suggests Davis, News... Ann Wedgeworth, the fine young actress who was so good in The Crucible revival missed this season by Watts, Post... David Merrick is not an ogre, but a shy, retiring millionaire, judges Slocum, Mirror, after seeing the producer blush when asked if the Washington, D.C. walkout of teen-agers at Sunday in New York was a prepared outrage... Perhaps what makes our theatre so dismal these days is that the playwrights have more than enough trouble making drama critics think of them as playwrights, notes Golden, Post.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Two Herald Tribune readers panned recent Sun article on "Amateur Acting" by Stephen Fitzgerald. NY community theatre director John Havens suggests the writer see a psychiatrist for advice on some other field of human endeavor which would be less distressing for him to write about While an Ohio reader feels sorry that Fitzgerald didn't get the role in his own community theatre.

NY CHILDREN'S THEATRE... Lack of public and newspaper support is injuring the professional production of children's theatre in NYC, Joy Bergman, director of American Theatre for Children, told Geracimos, Herald Tribune. Current week-end production of The Inside Out Adventure at One Sheridan Sq plays to less than 20 children and adults per performance. Her dream is of a permanently housed repertory group offering free theatre to children.

PROS & CONS BY TMK

Daughter of Silence is two poorly constructed, confusingly plotted dull dramas presented as one whole, serious production. Without filling in the details of character and plot that presumably are explained in the current novel by the same author, the audience is at a loss to understand the significance of the events in the twin narratives. The connection between the two segments can be guessed at, but few theatre-goers buy tickets to act as play doctors. Even those unusually addicted to courtroom dramas will be disappointed, because the legal conflict is lost in the expanded set that puts the judges half a city square away from the attorneys. Every character in the script, lawyers and laymen alike, seems to have taken a pledge to never interrupt a pretentious speech. New playwrights on Broadway should be encouraged. But not if they write old-fashioned boring plays.

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Sundays in New York is an enjoyable lightweight comedy farce with a charming, young talented cast and with inventive direction. The ingenious Garson Kanin turns the one set-one sofa apartment into seven different locations, including two moving vehicles. The fun based on a not so original twist of the "bedroom" premise is almost always in good taste. Okay for teen-agers, but not chaperones. No matter what some of the more learned theatre critics may state, it is not a dramatic sin to enjoy such a well-made product, neatly packaged.

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Shadow of Heroes is a heavy-handed, one-sided propaganda documentary. Convincing itself more than the audience that it is based on actual events of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the large cast continually changes the positions of onstage boxes specifying diverse locations. The events are portrayed in near cartoon fashion, so much so that the second night audience laughed at some of the histronic excesses. In the half a hundred actors involved, Salome Jens turns in another excellent performance to her perfect scoreboard. But the author is so insistent in his editorial demands that he left little room for dramatic interest.

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No matter what producers may say, in or out of paid ads, the NYC critics are among the kindest men alive. No one among the public has ever expressed a pleasant thought for the daily reviewers. But this week two first string critics praised the importance of the public in picking and supporting worthwhile productions. Reviewers are, or should be, among the most stage-struck in the entire profession. Their advertised function is to state their own dislikes and likes. There can be no joy in correctly predicting flops. There is no known scientific method to determine if their readers followed their advice in ticket buying. The NYC aisle-sitters have accepted the role of scapegoat with slight argument. They don't even answer back vicious ads.

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President Kennedy certainly wasn't talking about Off Broadway when he chided Americans for being spectators rather than participants in sports. Physically, psychologically, economically attending "vanity" Off Broadway productions whose main attribute is the friendship of the producer to somebody involved is much more tiring than touch football.

OUTER BROADWAY THEATRE LETTER

College Theatre

High Time Along the Wabash by William Saroyan presented at Purdue Univ Playhouse, Lafayette, Ind, where he is artist-in-residence this term... The Great Wall of China by Frank Wattron presented by Drama Workshop, Teachers College, Columbia Univ, NYC... The Lark, Christopher Fry's translation of the Anouilh play presented at Boston Univ. Theatre ... Coventry Mystery Cycle to be presented at Christmas at Hunter College, NYC.

Theatre du Vieux Colombier, Paris, to present nine week, 34 college tour starting Jun 14-18 Hunter College, NYC. French repertory company will present No Exit and The Bald Soprano.

ENGLAND: Manchester Univ Dept of Drama established by grant from Granada TV Network, Hugh Hunt chairman.. Southampton Univ to build $500,000 playhouse next year with Nuffield Foundation grant... Univ of Sussex named Flora Robson to its council... Univ of York, to be established next year, to include Chair of Drama.

New Playhouses

McVickers Theatre, Chicago, to be refurbished and re-opened as 2000 seat legit house by David Nederlander in 1962, after Erlanger is razed ... Seton Hall Univ, South Orange, NJ, to construct 400 seat theatre-in-the-round playhouse in new $3 million student center.

Community Theatre

The Little Theatre of Shreveport, La, celebrating 40th anniversary, directed since 1938 by Mr & Mrs John Wray Young.

Communications Group

First talent audition for Ford Fund's "Theatre Communication Group" members will be held in Feb at Goodman Memorial Theatre. 24 participating non-profit theatres will seek performing and non-performing staff members.

Summer Playhouses

Council of Stock Theatres re-elected Rowena Stevens, Pocono Playhouse, Mountainhome, Penn, president for a two year term.

Winter Repertory

Fred Miller Theatre, Milwaukee, named Allen Fletcher and William Ball to direct resident company season Dec 26-May 20 of seven productions--The Matchmaker, Six Characters in Search of an Author, The Taming of the Shrew, The Crucible, Charley's Aunt, A Streetcar Named Desire and a musical to be chosen. Free bus service for groups of 40 from nearby cities ans a subsidized student ticket plan (with local businessmen paying half) are new promotion projects started by new general manager Joyce Henry.

Swan Theatre, Milwaukee, opens Jan 1 with Third Best Sport starring Gypsy Rose Lee.. Big Fish Little Fish opens Dec 18 at Players Ring Theatre, Los Angeles, staged by Terrence Kilburn

Shakespeare

What You Will program of Shakespeare readings with Helen Hayes and Maurice Evans to be presented as part of next summer's repetory program at American Shakespeare Festival, Stratford, Conn. The bridged commentary will be written by Marchette Chute, program directed by Douglas Seale.

Road Shows

The Premise second company to be presented in Jan at Hotel Shoreham, Washington. D. C... Theatre Outlook, English repertory troupe, will conclude US tour with three week run Dec 16 at Civic Theatre, Chicago with repertory of School for Scandal, Coriolanus, Four Men.

Drama Desk

Lary Solloway replaced Paul Bruun, as amusement editor of Miami Beach Daily Sun

London

Critic's Choice with Ian Carmichael opened at Vaudeville. Reuters critic thought play remote but reported audience at first night enjoyed it ... Prince Charles Theatre, new 500 seat playhouse at Leicester Pl, corner stone to be laid Dec 18 by Flora Robson, opening set for Jul... Anna Massey to appear in School for Scandal, staged by John Gielgud... 10 African members of King Kong will not return to South Africa. Kermit Bloomgarden dropped his NY option on native musical... A Shot in the Dark to be presented this spring by Richard Rodgers and Leland Hayward.

Paris

26 of the 29 Comedie Francaise permanent members have expressed support for fellow actor Maurice Escande to be retained as adminstrator, rather than newly appointed career diplomat Claude Breart de Boisanger... Peter Brook to direct Shakespeare production for Comedie Francaise this season.

Australia

Joan Littlewood will direct several new Australian plays for Australian Elizabethan Theatre next year... Sound of Music, Lock Up Your Daughters and Come Blow Your Horn are current hits produced by Garnet Carroll in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney.

Germany

Photo Finish a new play by Peter Ustinov to be presented in Mar at Schiller Theatre, Berlin.

Mexico

Ofelia Theatre is new name of Basurto Theatre, Mexico City, to be re-opened by Cantinflas... Star will also appear in new musical with Mexican talent next year for National Institute of Fine Arts.

Soviet

Contemporary Tragedy now being presented in Samarkand includes a "ghosts of Hiroshima " parade into the audience and a Russian version of a hulu-hulu, reports Salisbury, Times. Theme of play is to call for end of nuclear arms and all testing.

Current Road Shows

Captains & Kings- Locust, Philadelphia 12/11

Something About A Soldier-Forrest, Philadelphia 12/4

Subways Are For Sleeping-Colonial, Boston 11/26

Take Her, She's Mine-Shubert, Boston 12/5

"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week." CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.